§m

One of the most prominent figures in German public life, in the middle of the last century, was Ferdinand Lassalle, whose influence is traceable not only in the political conceptions of all Western countries, but also (paradoxical though it may seem) in the ideology of the Nazi party. He began his public life in the battle for liberty in 1848: but in prison he came to the conclusion that the wrongs of the masses lay more in the economic than in the political sphere. From 1861 to his premature death, in a duel, in 1864, he swept Germany with his campaign of Economic Democracy. In 1863, he founded the first Workers' Party—the General German Working-man's Association—out of which grew the party of the Social Democrats, or Socialists. In return for the franchise and social welfare legislation, he was prepared to support even Bismarck. On the Continent, his was perhaps the first authoritative voice of the nineteenth century to assert, notwithstanding the angry resentment which his views aroused, the right of the masses to a voice in the government. He was barely forty years old at the time of his death: but he had prepared the ground for a new attitude in Europe.

Lassalle's views seemed extreme in his day. After him, the political interests of German Jews, if generally inclining to the left, were predominantly moderate. When in 1890 the ban on Socialism was removed and it

came once more into the open, it had lost its revolutionary character—mainly owing to Eduard Bernstein, the theoretician of the movement as a reformist doctrine. The revolutionary ardour had clearly disappeared.[1]

[1] Elsewhere Jews contributed during this period a few important names, but not many leaders, to the Left wing in politics. In EYance,